

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-21 (Canceled).

Claim 22 (New): A server computer connected through a network to a plurality of terminals, each associated with a bidder in an electrical auction, the server comprising:

a merchandise database configured to store a plurality of alternative merchandise information, each including an information concerning a characteristic of an alternative merchandise and an information concerning a price of the alternative merchandise;

a bid information selecting section configured to select an unsuccessful bid information of an unsuccessful bidder from stored bid information;

an extracting section configured to extract an unsuccessful bid price and an unsuccessful bid characteristic from the selected unsuccessful bid information;

an alternative merchandise selecting section configured to select, from the merchandise database, alternative merchandise information that satisfies a predetermined rule of comparison with the extracted unsuccessful bid price and the extracted unsuccessful bid characteristic; and

a notifying section configured to notify a terminal associated with the unsuccessful bidder of the selected alternative merchandise information.

Claim 23 (New): The server of claim 22, wherein the alternative merchandise selecting section is further configured to select alternative merchandise information that satisfies the predetermined rule of comparison that includes at least one of 1) an exact match between the unsuccessful bid characteristic and the characteristic of the alternative

merchandise, or 2) a proximity of the unsuccessful bid price and the price of the alternative merchandise.

Claim 24 (New): The server of claim 22, wherein:

the extracting section is further configured to extract an unsuccessful bid characteristic from a selected unsuccessful bid information of the unsuccessful bidder in a previous auction for a previously auctioned merchandise, the unsuccessful bid characteristic including at least one of a function, a kind, a type, a specification, or a condition of the previously auctioned merchandise.

Claim 25 (New): The server of claim 22, wherein the alternative merchandise selecting section is further configured to select a predetermined number of alternative merchandise that satisfies the predetermined rule.

Claim 26 (New): The server of claim 22, wherein the plurality of alternative merchandise information includes information concerning alternative merchandise that is available for purchase.

Claim 27 (New): An electrical auction method using a server computer connected through a network to a plurality of terminals, each associated with a bidder in an electrical auction, comprising:

storing, in a merchandise database, a plurality of alternative merchandise information, each including an information concerning a characteristic of an alternative merchandise and an information concerning a price of the alternative merchandise;

selecting a bid information of an unsuccessful bidder from stored bid information;

extracting an unsuccessful bid price and an unsuccessful bid characteristic from the selected bid information;

selecting alternative merchandise information from the merchandise database that satisfies a predetermined rule of comparison with the extracted unsuccessful bid price and the extracted unsuccessful bid characteristic; and

notifying a terminal associated with the unsuccessful bidder of the selected alternative merchandise information.

Claim 28 (New): The method of claim 27, further comprising:

selecting alternative merchandise information that satisfies the predetermined rule of comparison that includes at least one of 1) an exact match between the unsuccessful bid characteristic and the characteristic of the alternative merchandise, or 2) a proximity of the unsuccessful bid price and the price of the alternative merchandise.

Claim 29 (New): The method of claim 27, wherein:

extracting an unsuccessful bid characteristic from a selected unsuccessful bid information of the unsuccessful bidder in a previous auction for a previously auctioned merchandise, the unsuccessful bid characteristic including at least one of a function, a kind, a type, a specification, or a condition of the previously auctioned merchandise.

Claim 30 (New): The method of claim 27, further comprising:

selecting a predetermined number of alternative merchandise that satisfies the predetermined rule.

Claim 31 (New): The method of claim 27, wherein the plurality of alternative merchandise information includes information concerning alternative merchandise that is available for purchase.

Claim 32 (New): A computer program product storing program instructions which, when executed by a server computer connected through a network to a plurality of terminals, each associated with a bidder in an electrical auction, result in performance of steps comprising:

storing, in a merchandise database, a plurality of alternative merchandise information, each including an information concerning a characteristic of an alternative merchandise and an information concerning a price of the alternative merchandise;

selecting a bid information of an unsuccessful bidder from stored bid information;

extracting an unsuccessful bid price and an unsuccessful bid characteristic from the selected bid information;

selecting alternative merchandise information from the merchandise database that satisfies a predetermined rule of comparison with the extracted unsuccessful bid price and the extracted unsuccessful bid characteristic; and

notifying a terminal associated with the unsuccessful bidder of the selected alternative merchandise information.

Claim 33 (New): The computer program product of claim 32, further resulting in performance of steps comprising:

selecting alternative merchandise information that satisfies the predetermined rule of comparison that includes at least one of 1) an exact match between the unsuccessful bid

characteristic and the characteristic of the alternative merchandise, or 2) a proximity of the unsuccessful bid price and the price of the alternative merchandise.

Claim 34 (New): The computer program product of claim 32, further resulting in performance of steps comprising:

extracting an unsuccessful bid characteristic from a selected unsuccessful bid information of the unsuccessful bidder in a previous auction for a previously auctioned merchandise, the unsuccessful bid characteristic including at least one of a function, a kind, a type, a specification, or a condition of the previously auctioned merchandise.

Claim 35 (New): The computer program product of claim 32, further resulting in performance of steps comprising:

selecting a predetermined number of alternative merchandise that satisfies the predetermined rule.

Claim 36 (New): The computer program product of claim 32, wherein the plurality of alternative merchandise information includes information concerning alternative merchandise that is available for purchase.

Claim 37 (New): An auction system, comprising:
a plurality of terminals, each associated with a bidder in an electrical auction; and
a server computer connected through a network to the plurality of terminals, the server computer comprising
a merchandise database configured to store a plurality of alternative merchandise information, each including an information concerning a characteristic of

an alternative merchandise and an information concerning a price of the alternative merchandise;

a bid information selecting section configured to select an unsuccessful bid information of an unsuccessful bidder from stored bid information;

an extracting section configured to extract an unsuccessful bid price and an unsuccessful bid characteristic from the selected unsuccessful bid information;

an alternative merchandise selecting section configured to select, from the merchandise database, alternative merchandise information that satisfies a predetermined rule of comparison with the extracted unsuccessful bid price and the extracted unsuccessful bid characteristic; and

a notifying section configured to notify a terminal associated with the unsuccessful bidder of the selected alternative merchandise information.

Claim 38 (New): A server computer connected through a network to a plurality of terminals, each associated with a bidder in an electrical auction, the server comprising:

a merchandise database configured to store a plurality of alternative merchandise information, each including an information concerning a characteristic of an alternative merchandise and an information concerning a price of the alternative merchandise;

a bid information selecting section configured to select an unsuccessful bid information of an unsuccessful bidder from stored bid information;

an extracting section configured to extract an unsuccessful bid price and an unsuccessful bid characteristic from the selected unsuccessful bid information;

means for selecting alternative merchandise from the merchandise database that satisfies a predetermined rule of comparison with the extracted unsuccessful bid price and the extracted unsuccessful bid characteristic; and

a notifying section configured to notify a terminal associated with the unsuccessful bidder of the selected alternative merchandise information.